

Utilizing Your Communication/People Styles at Work

Learning Objectives:

- Assess your own communication and personality styles.
- Learn four (4) basic behavioral styles.
- Analyze each behavioral style for strengths and weaknesses.
- Identify behavior changes due to stress.
- Learn how to work with each style to facilitate teamwork.



Communication Styles Exercise

This exercise is designed to help you learn how you come across to people. Respond as you feel you actually are – not as you would like to be. There are no right or wrong answers; no good or bad styles, just differences. We need to appreciate the differences, as each style reflects a unique perspective.

Working horizontally left to right, circle the one word on each line that describes your communication style on the job at least 80 percent of the time. Each horizontal row should have only one circled word. Total the number of words in each column when you are finished.

Bold	Enthusiastic	Patient	Careful
Impatient	Talkative	Steady	Analytical
Assertive	Expressive	Passive	Formal
Decisive	Impulsive	Agreeable	Exacting
Risk-Taker	Flexible	Structured	Precise
Competitive	Convincing	Sincere	Conservative
Results-Driven	Interactor	Team Player	Likes Data
Confident	Positive	Harmonious	Reserved
Demanding	Emotional	Tolerant	Private
Intense	Trusting	Objective	Focused
Direct	Charming	Lenient	Accurate
High Ego	Inspirational	Counselor	Logical
Autocratic	Motivating	Status Quo	Organized
Forceful	Independent	Sensitive	Likes Rules
TOTAL:	TOTAL:	TOTAL:	TOTAL:

Four People Styles

Analytical

The Analytical style is the most perfectionistic of the styles. Analytical people want things they're associated with to be *right*. Long before the current quality movement, they were urging, "Let's do it right so we won't have to do it over." They set very high standards and are willing to do the time-consuming work needed to achieve or exceed those standards. Analyticals are sticklers for detail, since they believe that vigorous attention to every aspect of a project, no matter how insignificant, contributes to the final outcome.

Analyticals tend to be the most critical of the styles. Because of their perfectionistic tendencies, they are often very hard on themselves – and on others. Their exacting standards cause them to be generally very sparing with compliments and expressions of appreciation. Analyticals need to guard against these tendencies, because it can be demoralizing to work for someone who is big on criticism and small on compliments.

The Analytical is known for being systematic and well-organized. At best, this style is adept at building highly effective processes that produce consistently outstanding results. At its worst, however, the Analytical's methodical bent can degenerate into the bureaucracy of excessive regulations and a by-the-book mentality.

This style craves data. The more, the better. When you see an effective Analytical converting data into useful information, you understand the truth of the old saying, "knowledge is power."

When facing risks, the Analytical tends to be prudent. Many take calculated risks, but some are reluctant to do even that. As a rule, they'd rather be safe than sorry.

Don't expect these prudent people to be cavalier about decision making. They want to be *certain* of making the right choice. But such certainty is not possible. Analyticals gather as much information as they can; even so, there's seldom enough data about the options for them to be comfortable about making a decision. They try to weigh the options, which usually include imponderables. As a result, Analyticals often agonize over decisions. Some become stressed about even small decisions such as what to order when eating out.

An Analytical likes to be alone or with just a few other people. If possible, he/she leaves the big gatherings and cocktail parties to others; he/she'd rather stay home and read a book. A person of this style is rarely linked closely to the grapevine but may be

tapped into the Internet. An Analytical who has an office can usually be found in it . . . and the door is probably closed. An Analytical has to be pushed to manage by walking around. In fact, he/she typically prefers working alone to working with others. Despite the Analytical's solitary nature, he/she surprises you by being loyal when the going gets rough. Though this style isn't overtly people-oriented, in crunch situations, the Analytical often tries to see that employees are treated fairly.

The Analytical's body language is low-key. They walk more slowly than other styles. They tend to lean back in their chair even when making a point. Analyticals don't gesture much, and their gestures tend to be smaller, less flowing, and less emphatic than is common. Nor are they noted for having much eye contact or facial expressiveness. They tend to dress conservatively. If they have an office, they probably prefer businesslike décor.

The Analytical is the quietest of the styles. They tend to speak less often than people of other styles – except when delving into great detail on a topic. When the Analytical talks, the volume is low, the pace is slow, and there's little inflection in the voice. People of this style like to think things through before speaking. They continue thinking as they talk, scanning their minds for the right word or phrase to communicate content accurately. This leads to frequent hesitations, which others may find annoying. Also, since they are thinking about what they say as they speak, they're apt to interrupt themselves in midsentence and begin a new thought that just came to mind – a trait that often confuses listeners. It's easy to see why a person of this style tends to favor written over spoken communication.

The content of an Analytical's conversation has some distinguishing characteristics. When talking, an Analytical typically is more task-oriented than people-oriented. He/she approaches issues logically and, even in casual conversation, is apt to break what he/she's saying into points: "In the first place . . .," "Secondly . . .," and so forth. Analyticals strive for accuracy and expect it in others. They want people to furnish them with details; when they explain something, they normally give more minutiae than people of other styles want. They're more apt to analyze an issue and see the complexity involved than they are to decisively recommend a course of action. Harry Truman, one of our more assertive presidents used to say he wanted a one-armed economist; he was tired of advisers who said, "On the one hand this, but on the other hand that." Truman undoubtedly said that after a conference with Analyticals, who are adept at elaborating on the intricacies of a problem but won't make a clear-cut recommendation.

Analyticals tend to be indirect when making a request or stating an opinion. The comment "Perhaps we should consider such and so" may mean "I think we should do it." Sometimes an Analytical asks a question but is really making a statement. "Do you think it would be wise to . . .?" may mean "I'd like you to take this action."

Analyticals don't wear feelings on their sleeve. They may feel as deeply about an issue as anyone else, but they'll probably talk about the facts of the case rather than their feelings about it. They often intellectualize feelings, both their own and those of other people. People often find Analyticals hard to read because they show so little emotion. Sometimes Analyticals are not in touch with their own feelings. Their heads shout so loudly that they can't hear what their guts are saying.

The Analytical tries to avoid the emotionality that's related to conflict. When others get carried away by emotion, Analyticals retreat into their heads and become emotionally detached. People of this style assume a rational approach will cool an overheated situation. It often has the opposite result. Expressives, in particular, become even more upset when an Analytical tries to get them to talk calmly and rationally during a conflict. When the Analytical avoids conflict, important issues are tabled, problems are left unattended, and significant opportunities may be missed.

When it comes to time management, the Analytical is a strange mix. He/she tends to be punctual for appointments but tardy in meeting deadlines. It's easy to see why this style would tend to miss deadlines. Analyticals' perfectionistic quest for quality leads them to set exceedingly high standards. At the same time, they do things more slowly and deliberately than most people. They examine more options. They research each alternative with exceptional thoroughness. When the research is finally concluded, they take an unusually long time to arrive at a decision. Every aspect of the Analytical's pacing is slower than that of the more assertive styles.

No one is completely true to type. The average Analytical will have most of the characteristics described above but not all of them. So when working with an Analytical, be alert to the characteristics of this style but also look for behaviors that may be exceptions to the rule.

Amiables

The Amiable gets things done in a manner that's less assertive than average, combined with more-than-average responsiveness.

The Amiable and Analytical share a similar level of assertiveness. Therefore, you will find numerous similarities between Amiables and Analyticals. The difference between these two styles is in their degree of responsiveness. The Amiable shows considerably more emotion than the Analytical, and this distinction is connected to a number of other behavioral differences between the two styles.

To a great degree than is typical of other styles, the Amiable is a team player. He/she normally prefers working with others, especially in small groups or one-on-one. He/she doesn't seek the spotlight and seldom gets into ego clashes with others. Amiables are less likely than the more assertive styles to seek power for themselves. They can be

skilled at encouraging others to expand on their ideas and are good at seeing value in other people's contribution. As a result of their openness to the opinions of others, they are sometimes able to salvage a person's worthwhile ideas that other team members are quick to discount. People of this style may also be adept at integrating conflicting opinions into a synthesis that all parties can genuinely support.

Amiables' effectiveness as team players is enhanced by their generosity with their time. If a co-worker asks for advice or help, they drop what they're doing to help. They often volunteer to do unglamorous, out-of-the-limelight activities for the team. Because of their dedicated backstage work, they are the unsung heroes of many a team effort. While this unselfishness is often constructive, the Amiable may overdo it to such an extent as to default on delivering his or her own commitments in a timely manner.

The Amiable's quiet friendliness is an asset in working with people. Both the Amiables and the Expressives, are very people-oriented. The Expressive, though, is more rambunctious about it. The Amiable takes more of a low-key approach. With an easy-going, likable manner, the Amiable appears to build relationships more easily than most people. Ties to others are often more personal than is characteristic of other styles.

People of this style back up their friendliness with empathy. They're generally more interested in hearing your concerns than they are in expressing their own. Amiables are especially sensitive to other people's feelings. When compassion is appropriate, it shows on their faces and in their eyes as well as in their words. Consequently, people tend to confide in them.

The Amiable usually performs best in a stable, clearly structured situation. This style is not as enamored of goal setting and planning as the other types. Amiables often prefer to have the organization define their role and set their goals – as long as the demands aren't unreasonable. Once their role is clarified and the direction is set, they work steadily in the performance of their duties. As a rule, people of this style are industrious, service-oriented workers. Because of their easygoing, friendly, unpretentious ways, other people may not realize how much work they turn out.

Some Amiables, however, overdo their friendliness and are sidetracked from task by their desire to relate to people. If all work can be said to consist of task aspects and people aspects, Drivers and Analyticals are prone to overemphasize the task while Amiables and Expressives may give disproportionate time and attention to their relationships with people.

Some people are better at creating products, organizations, etc., while others are better at maintaining them. Amiables shine as maintainers. They value what has already been created and find satisfaction in working to preserve it. Also, to a greater degree than most people, Amiables are comfortable doing routine procedures and following processes established by others.

The Amiable, like the Analytical, tends to be indecisive and takes a cautious approach to decision making, looking for guarantees to lower the risks involved. This style touches base with the people affected by a decision before coming to a final conclusion. Amiables often delay making decisions, especially when risk is involved or when it's a controversial call and people are likely to be upset by the outcome. However, Amiables may also delay making a decision simply because they find it so uncomfortable to make a clear-cut choice.

The Amiable is conscientious, but not enthusiastic, about reading memos and reports, preferring instead to hear directly from people. So when they can, Amiables talk face-to-face or get on the phone. Many are well connected to the grapevine.

Amiables are patient with other people, and with organizations. They may gripe about a bad situation, but they're likely to carry on. They do have a limit, though. If you persist too long in treating them in ways they don't like, they'll eventually become angry and will be very slow to forgive or forget.

The Amiable's body language is low-key. This style walks more slowly than Drivers and Expressives and has less erect posture. They often lean back in their chair even when making a request or stating an opinion. Amiables rely on gestures when communicating; and their movements tend to be fluid and graceful, though not dramatic. They're comfortable with eye contact and are facially expressive. In conversation, Amiables tend to use less "air time" than Drivers and Expressives. They're usually slower in forming an opinion about a recommended course of action than Drivers or Expressives. So when a course of action is being discussed, the Amiable's input tends to come late in the session or not at all. The Amiables' voice is warm and the volume is low. This style also speaks more slowly than Drivers and Expressives. Their taste in clothes can be characterized as appropriate and, when the situation allows, casual. (Of course, people of any style may be influenced by dress-for-success literature or may wear clothing that others pick out for them.)

The Amiable's conversation is more people-oriented than task-oriented. People of this style are gracious with small talk. They speak more about people and feelings than the others. They're apt to ask you how your trip went last week or how your child did in a recent game or competition. Their focus on people and feelings continues when the discussion turns to work issues. They wonder, for example, how people in the department feel about the new procedure being discussed. This consistent attention to the human component of work can enhance morale and make the process of change far less disruptive than it might be without the Amiable's influence.

It's often thought that Amiables are very disclosing. Their facial expressions seem very open. In conversation, Amiables reveal personal things about themselves that make people feel they know them better than they know most people. Often, however,

Amiables are surprisingly guarded. They don't communicate many of the thoughts and feelings that are important to them. This type of person especially withholds feelings of anger and critical judgments of others. The Amiable can seem calm on the outside while a storm rages within.

When Amiables make a request or state an opinion, they're inclined to phrase it indirectly. They often state their point of view by asking a question. Rather than declaring, "Let's move ahead with Campaign X," he/she might ask, "Do you think Campaign X is the way to go?" Or he/she may quote others who share the same opinion: "A lot of people are saying that Campaign X is the way to go." The asking-oriented tendency of the Amiable may become too pronounced, leading people to complain, "I don't know where Peter is coming from. I wish he'd take a clear stand on things."

When people work together, there's bound to be conflict. Some conflict is productive, although much is destructive. Because Amiables treasure harmonious relationships, they are natural peacemakers and are often found pouring oil on troubled water. Their efforts at conciliation often make continued collaboration possible. At times, though they go overboard in their efforts and try to smooth things over even when hard issues must be faced and resolved.

Many Amiables are reluctant to tell it like it is for fear of alienating the other person. When opinions are divided about a course of action, Amiables are more likely than the average person to withhold their point of view. They may hesitate to contest a point, even when they think they're right and important issues are at stake. They may dislike conflict so much that they say what they think the other person wants to hear rather than what they really believe. Amiables who don't overcome this reticence to take a stand lose credibility with people who doubt they can count on them when the chips are down.

Another drawback related to the Amiable's need to maintain pleasant relationships is an unwillingness to confront a person's performance problems. Amiables tend to avoid giving corrective feedback. Yet they may be more critical than they let on. They may voice to a third party the critique that would do more good if stated directly to the person being criticized. As a manager, the Amiable can be slow to a fault in dealing with an employee's inadequate performance. This style is often squeamish about using authority, and when they finally apply it, they may use it inconsistently.

High-performing Amiables overcome the tendency to conceal true opinions. Yet they preserve their concern for the other person and the desire not to harm the relationship. Their tact enables them to say hard things while leaving the other person's ego intact. Their diplomatic timing and phrasing may enable their message to get through to people who were closed to the same idea expressed more bluntly by others.

When giving a general description of a style, we're speaking of broad tendencies. Few Amiables have all the characteristics we've described. People of other styles have some characteristics typical of Amiables.

Expressives

People with this style integrate a high level of assertiveness with much emotional expression (responsiveness).

This is the most flamboyant of the styles. Expressives tend toward the dramatic. They like bright colors, bold statements, and eye-catching projects. This style thrives on being in the limelight and seems to gravitate naturally to center stage.

This spirited style bristles with energy. The Expressive seems to have pep enough for any two people. Expressives' vim, vigor, and vitality are evident in nearly everything they do. The sheer energy of Expressives, when combined with other aspects of their high assertiveness, can make them seem overwhelming at times. Every once in a while, a person of this style temporarily runs out of steam, but that usually takes place when the stimulus of other people is missing. Because their sluggish moments occur when no one is around, the Expressive seems even more tirelessly energetic than is actually the case.

Perhaps because of their abundant energy, Expressives want to be continually on the go. They don't like to spend too long in any one spot, and they enjoy being where the action is. So you often see them walking about or hopping into the car. They hate to be confined to a desk all day long.

When required to sit through a long meeting, an Expressive's restless energy is still evident. He/she continuously shifts about in his/her chair. He/she's always moving his/her feet or legs, gesturing with his/her hands and arms, toying with a paper clip or pencil, or drumming his/her fingers on the table. When bored at meetings, the Expressive is unlikely to be subtly tuned out; rather he/she'll be engaged in a side conversation – or fully, obviously, intensely, and unmistakably disengaged.

The Expressive is the most outgoing of the styles. In contrast to the Amiable who conveys quiet friendliness, the Expressive takes a more hale-and hearty approach to people. This style is interpersonally proactive. Despite some inner qualms that may rise at times, these people seem to relate easily and effortlessly to strangers. As a result, a person of this outgoing style tends to have a larger circle of acquaintances than do people of other styles.

When Expressives have a choice of doing something alone or with other people, they prefer to link up with others. They invite people for lunch, to play tennis after work, or to go cycling on the weekend. When they travel out of town, they make the effort to

look up old acquaintances in the area they're visiting. This high-contact type of person spends considerable time on the telephone with lots of people. The Expressive is well tapped into the grapevine. As you'd imagine, this style prefers work that requires much interaction with people. These people, who are such naturals at networking, have innumerable contacts who can help them achieve their goals. People of this style lend credibility to the saying, "Who you know is as important as what you know."

Expressives tend to be dreamers. Their vision is typically bold and imaginative. They push people to look beyond the merely mundane and practical. They love blue-skying sessions, where imagination can soar without concern for pragmatic constraints. Every organization needs people who can envision great projects and who can conceive a bigger, better, and brighter future for the department or organization. Expressives help co-workers rise above a prosaic and unimaginative approach to work.

It's been said that to create castles in the air, it's necessary to build the foundations under them. That's where many Expressives are weak. They resist getting sufficiently involved in the nitty-gritty, even when it is essential to achieving their dream. This style likes to focus more on broad generalizations than on specific facts. The Expressive is interested in the forest rather than the trees and is content to have others do the details. When you and others are hard at work with the nitty-gritty effort to build the foundation under a castle in the air that an Expressive sold you on, you may find that he/she is not working along with you. He/she's off dreaming of other castles rather than helping to finish the one at hand.

Expressives are impulsive. They have a tendency to act first and think later. Many Expressives use a particular image to describe this aspect of their style; "First I dive into the pool, and then I look to see if there's any water in it." As a result of this tendency, people of this style have to work their way out of more than their share of problems which are of their own making.

The impulsiveness of Expressives often creates problems for themselves and others in the workplace. They prefer to work according to opportunity rather than according to plan. Few are good at time management. These easily diverted people pay less attention to clock time and calendar time than other styles do. They're often late to meetings or may miss them altogether. And they're often behind schedule with projects. Some habitually miss deadlines. Others become adept at catching up at the last minute. People are likely to get annoyed at the Expressive's seemingly free and easy approach to time.

The Expressive's own feelings have a powerful impact on him/her. More than any other style, he/she's on an emotional roller coaster. When emotionally high, he/she's ecstatic; when low, he/she tends to be in the pits. People often find it difficult to deal with these emotional extremes. Yet, because of their emotionality, the Expressives' enthusiasm in "up" times is contagious. Though people of each style can be good

motivators, the Expressive is often exceptionally effective at helping people recharge their emotional batteries.

Expressives are playful and fun-loving. They usually find a way to schedule some recreation into a crowded day. These people love a good time themselves, and they enjoy prompting happiness in others. They like to tell jokes, describe humorous incidents, think up pranks, and laugh heartily. A person noted for throwing great parties said that one key to a lively gathering is to make sure there are a number of Expressives in the group.

Expressives look for ways to make work more enjoyable – maybe even fun. They're apt to suggest you meet in the coffee shop rather than at the office. They may kid around for a few minutes before plunging into the topic at hand. They'll often find a humorous slant on something in an otherwise serious discussion. One Expressive CEO gave each new employee a Mickey Mouse wristwatch. "If work ever stops being fun," he'd say, "turn in your watch and find a job you enjoy." This very competitive CEO assumed that if you have fun at work, not only is it better for you but you'll be more productive, too.

When Expressives talk, their whole body joins in. Like the Amiables, they use flowing gestures – but they use more of them, and the motions are bigger and more forceful. Their facial expressions are the most communicative of all the styles. More than any other style, Expressives modulate the pitch and tone of voice to match what they are saying. The constantly changing inflection helps to hold people's attention. With their entire body language helping to communicate their message, Expressives at their best can do an exceptional job of getting a point across to an individual, a group, or a large audience.

Expressives are definitely *tell*-assertive. They advocate more than they inquire. They're more into talking than listening. They have a tendency to interrupt others and monopolize the conversation. Though Expressives may be perceptive in what they say and entertaining in the way they say it, they sometimes turn people off by their own one-sided conversations.

The hale and hearty Expressive speaks with a loud voice. In a restaurant, it may be easier to hear the Expressive four tables away than it is to hear your dinner partner sitting directly across from you.

Expressives are the most verbally fluent of the styles. Their words seem to flow effortlessly. They appear to have a large vocabulary, with immediate access to it. People of this style tend to speak very rapidly. Only a few Drivers can match their speaking pace.

When Expressives talk, they often “think out loud.” They “speak to find out what they are thinking.” Digressions are par for the course for this style. When an Expressive is holding the floor, he/she may skip from topic to topic in ways that seem to defy logic.

Storytelling is part and parcel of the Expressive’s way of communicating. He/she breaks the ice with a joke or a humorous incident that happened to him or to a mutual acquaintance. When making a point, he/she’s more likely to cite an example than to present a string of facts. He/she probably won’t quote any statistics – unless, of course, the numbers are very dramatic.

Regarding the content of their conversations, Expressives are more people-oriented than task-oriented. It’s not that they’re disinterested in getting the task done; it’s just that their manner of doing it has more of a people focus. For example, if you meet with an Expressive about a specific issue, don’t expect to get to the point right away. If the Expressive takes the lead, as will undoubtedly happen, the initial part of the conversation is likely to be about both of you and other people, and he/she may tell a story or two before focusing on the issue. For the Expressive, these topics aren’t beside the point but are an important prelude to conversations about substantive issues. Analyticals and Drivers who are more task-focused often consider that this extended rapport building is a waste of time and may get tense waiting for the Expressive to get to business. The Expressive thinks this is business: “After all, what is business if it’s not people talking to each other?”

The Expressive is apt to be up-front about saying what he/she does or doesn’t like about your proposal or your behavior. This is a tell-it-like-it-is style. Although Expressives may mean no offense, their comments sometimes seem abrasive, especially to less assertive folks. Yet this willingness to raise the hard issues, which can be crucial to productivity, may stimulate people to work on issues that require attention.

Not every Expressive, of course, has all these characteristics. And, depending on their degree of assertiveness and responsiveness, their behaviors may be more muted or exaggerated than described here. Still, you surely recognize your Expressive colleagues and friends already in this description.

Drivers

The other type of person you work with is the Driver. Drivers blend a higher-than-average level of assertiveness with less-than-average responsiveness.

The Driver is very results-focused. This, the most practical of the styles, prides itself on its bottom-line orientation. A strong goal orientation characterizes the Driver. This style loves nothing more than to set high yet realistic objectives and then set about accomplishing them. However, these are very independent people; they want to set their own goals rather than have someone else set them.

The Driver is a get-it-done type of person. While an Analytical is thinking about a problem, an Amiable is meeting about it, and an Expressive is talking about it, the Driver is doing something about it. The action may not be the best solution, the Driver feels relieved because something's getting done.

The Driver believes, with Thomas Carlyle, that "Our business is not to see what lies at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand." Unfortunately, with their excessive focus on the immediate situation, Drivers may not give sufficient consideration to the long-range implications of their actions.

Decisiveness is a salient characteristic of Drivers. They don't agonize over decisions as Analyticals and Amiables do. The Analytical is seeking to make the right decision. The Amiable is looking for guarantees that the outcome will be satisfactory. The Driver takes a different approach to decision making. Drivers believe that indecision *is* a decision, and inevitably a bad one. Also, they're not compulsive about the quality of their decisions. "When you are 55 percent sure," they say, "it's time to act. If you wait until you are 95 percent sure, you won't succeed in this competitive and very fast-paced environment." Rather than try to make the right decision each time, rather than secure guarantees that every decision will work out, the Driver says, "If six out of ten of my decisions pan out, I'm ahead of the game." When a decision turns out poorly, the Driver often takes it philosophically: "You win some, you lose some." This seemingly offhand approach to important decisions often seems irresponsible to Analyticals and Amiables.

In matters of opinion and of policy, Drivers are more likely to change their mind than are the less assertive styles – Analyticals or Amiables. Because Drivers are so purposeful and rational, people are often surprised by the abrupt changes in their thinking and the sudden shifts in plans. It's not unlike a Driver to do an about-face that leaves everybody astounded. President Richard Nixon, a Driver, was one of the Communism's implacable foes for years. Then he surprised the world by establishing diplomatic ties with Communist China.

Drivers are often puzzled by others' strong reactions to their reversals of position. The Analytical's tendency to theorize and to commit to principles creates a fairly consistent outlook. The Amiable is generally more wedded to the status quo than the Driver. The Amiable also anticipates the emotional discomfort people will experience as a result of the change. The Driver, however, is more focused on the immediate situation than on theory or principle or feelings. In the Driver's mind, the situation has changed and the response needs to change. And that appraisal may be accurate. However, Drivers are sometimes so fast-paced and action-oriented that they may improvise a hasty and ill-conceived course of action that merely sets the stage for a new batch of problems.

Drivers typically excel at time management. Books and courses on this topic usually consist of a smorgasbord of methods that are characterized by task orientation and efficiency.

The Driver's body language suggests purposefulness. His/her posture is erect. He/she seems to lean into everything he/she does. He/she walks and moves faster than most people. Gestures, though fewer, smaller, and less flowing than the Expressive's, can be very forceful. The Driver's facial expression tends to be more serious than that of the Amiables and Expressives and more intense than that of the Analytical. When stating his/her point of view, the Driver's eye contact is direct – sometimes to the listener's discomfort.

Like every other characteristic, Drivers' speech is fast-paced. There's little vocal inflection. Drivers are quite forthright in stating their opinions or making requests. They're factual but not detailed, rational but not theoretical, direct and to the point. Combine this no-frills conversational style with rapid delivery, a leaning-in posture, forceful gestures, and eye contact that may seem piercing, and you can understand why some less assertive people can be intimidated by the Driver's style of communication.

A Driver takes a task-oriented approach to communication. He/she may discipline him/herself to engage in a little "small talk," but it's not his forte and the effort to build rapport may seem forced. Once the preliminaries are dispensed with, Drivers often rat-a-tat their way through the agenda until your time's up. The slower-paced Analytical and Amiable may feel bulldozed by this quick and relentless push through the agenda. The Amiable and the Expressive, whose behaviors are more people-oriented, are apt to reflect, "He/she didn't even treat us like *people*." Drivers can accomplish a tremendous amount in a short time. However, if people feel bulldozed or depersonalized, there's a danger that the progress may be more illusory than real. Other people's lack of buy-in or outright resistance may delay or sabotage the outcome.

When we say the Driver is task-oriented rather than people-oriented, we don't imply a lack of caring about people. A Driver may have sincere concern for other people but just not talk about it as much as an Expressive or Amiable person might. Nor does this style's body language reveal the depth or concern they may have for others. Drivers are doers, and their feelings are often channeled into the language of action.

The Driver's high energy, fast pace, purposefulness, and directness of speech can trigger resentment in people. People often think of the Driver as being the most assertive of the styles. Yet the Expressive style is as assertive as the Driver style. The difference between the two styles is that the Expressive is much more responsive – more emotionally disclosing and people-oriented. The Expressive is apt to inquire about your spouse and kids and tell you about a humorous incident that happened last week. Expressives fool around some of the time and entertain with stories, wisecracks, and

jokes. Appearing as it does in its package of behaviors, assertiveness may seem less stark than it otherwise would. By contrast, the Driver comes across as purposeful rather than playful. He/she's perceived as task-oriented rather than people-oriented. So when he/she's assertive, that's what you see – and typically little else. Consequently, a Driver may *seem* more forceful than an equally assertive Expressive.

Obviously, not all Drivers match this description in every detail. But by and large, this portrait should be a fairly good description of the Drivers you know.

Excerpted from: People Styles at Work, by Robert Bolton and Dorothy Grover Bolton, American Management Association, 1996.

Driver

This style likes to be in control. They are very direct, and action-oriented. They focus on getting results. They like and cause change. Under stress, they sometimes tread on others without realizing it.

Their value to the team:
Phone style:
Listening style:
Irritated by:
When angry:
Directives/rules:
Wants you to be:
Worst way to treat them:
Possible perception by others:

Expressive

This style wants and needs group interaction. They are very trusting. They are fun to be around, and are excellent motivators. This style talks the most and can be impulsive.

Their value to the team:
Phone style:
Listening style:
Irritated by:
When angry:
Directives/rules:
Wants you to be:
Worst way to treat them:
Possible perception by others:

Amiable

This style has strong attachments to family and friends. They are slow to change their loyalties. They blend the best with all the other styles. Under stress this style can become very passive.

Their value to the team:
Phone style:
Listening style:
Irritated by:
When angry:
Directives/rules:
Wants you to be:
Worst way to treat them:
Possible perception by others:

Analytical

This style believes in and follows rules. They like systems, predictability, tradition and quality control. They trust people the least and are the most private. They like back-up data and do not like to make mistakes. They take feedback of their work personally. Never guess at answers with them.

Their value to the team:
Phone style:
Listening style:
Irritated by:
When angry:
Directives/rules:
Wants you to be:
Worst way to treat them:
Possible perception by others:

Four Steps to Better Relationships

Step One: *Identify*

Step Two: *Plan*

Step Three: *Implement*

Step Four: *Evaluate*

Step One: Identify

In this step you:

- Note your own style
- Identify the other person's style

In order to flex your style, you need to identify it fairly accurately. Your initial self-assessment of your style may be faulty. In part, that's because your style isn't so much a matter of what you are like inside as it is about how you come across to other people.

Obviously, to flex effectively, it's important to correctly identify the style of the person or persons you'll be relating to. Accurate identification of the other person's style is essential.

Step Two: Plan

Some people are turned off by the idea of planning how to interact with a colleague. More than one person has commented, "It's pretty bad when you have to plan how you are going to relate to a person. It's all so . . . calculated."

The fact is, *everyone* does some planning for communication with others. We create agendas for meetings. We sometimes note the things to be covered in a phone call. We know Helene is a "morning person," so we schedule an appointment with her early in the day. As we drive to work, we mull over an important conversation that's coming up.

We plan our non-work interactions, too – even the most intimate ones. Before proposing marriage, many people spend considerable time thinking about where they'll propose and what they'll say. If there were tense words when we left home in the morning, we may try to think of what we can say or do to get the relationship back on track.

It's human nature to anticipate many of our meetings with people and to think about how we'd like the meeting to go. In the planning step of style flex, you simply incorporate your knowledge of styles into your preparation.

With experience, you are often able to do the planning in your head, on the spur of the moment, while you're talking with someone. At the beginning, though, or when the

stakes are especially high, or when an interaction is apt to be quite stressful, it's best to do advance planning. Sometimes it's even advisable to write out the plan.

Step Three: Implement

In this step, you are interacting with the other person, usually face-to-face but sometimes on the phone or in writing. As you relate to the person, you make those changes in your own behavior that you believe can improve the transaction.

As you flex your style, you monitor whether or not the changes you've made are having a positive effect on the interaction. Is this new way of relating helping the other person work more comfortably with you? Are you both being more productive? If so, your hypothesis is confirmed. If not, you can make on-the-spot adaptations to improve it.

A truly flexible person knows that when relating to people, a certain amount of trial and error is unavoidable. So do your best thinking about how to flex to a particular person, act on that plan, monitor the impact of your behavior, and modify both your plan and your behavior when that's indicated.

Step Four: Evaluate

Although the interaction has concluded, one crucial step of the style flex process remains: evaluation.

Whenever you flex your style, take a moment to do an after-the-fact critique. Over time, these brief evaluations can help you increase your style-flex skills and improve your relationships.

First, look at the results of the interaction.

- Given the content discussed, was the person more at ease than normal?
- Was the interaction more productive than usual?

Next, note what went well.

- What specifically did you do that the other person responded to positively?
- Which of your changed behaviors seemed to have the most impact?
- Is this something you want to do more often with this person?
- Is this something you'd want to consider doing with others of this style?

Finally, determine what disappointed you in your attempt to flex your style.

- What specifically did you try that did not seem to enhance the interaction?
- Was the problem due to:
 - Misidentification of the person's style?
 - Poor planning?
 - Ineffective implementation?

The evaluation step also enriches your understanding of the four styles. When people first learn this model, they often develop a simplistic idea of each of the styles. A more realistic understanding of how the styles play themselves out in the daily life comes from practicing style flex and learning about styles from each experience. As you mull over the ways the other person behaved when you were meeting, you gain a richness of understanding that can't be obtained any other way.

When to Flex Your Style

When should you flex your style? The general rule is to do it whenever it helps you establish or maintain a productive conversation. Here are some guidelines.

Not All the Time

By definition, style flex is the *temporary* adjustment of a few behaviors. Not only is it unnecessary to consciously adjust to other people's styles all the time, it's clearly undesirable to do so. For one thing, too much behavior that doesn't fit your personality may create suspicion and distrust among your colleagues. For another, the person who tries to flex all the time undermines his or her own personality. You'll build better relationships if you flex on those occasions when it's especially appropriate and not worry about it the rest of the time.

Open in Parallel

It often makes sense to open in parallel. That is, flex your style at the beginning of a conversation to start out in sync with the person in question. This is a time for building rapport. Being in sync with the other person's way of relating is one of the best ways of getting off to a harmonious start.

Most people sense the value of opening a conversation on a favorable note. However, few people realize the extent to which the beginning of a discussion sets the tone for the rest of it. The climate that's established in the first few minutes is surprisingly durable. We're not saying to open in parallel all the time. However, you can make the most of many conversations by getting in step with the other person at the outset.

Just-in-Time Flex

It's often a good plan to open in parallel and then, after a few minutes, relax your efforts. Keep monitoring the other person's stress, though, and if it starts to rise, begin to flex again. Then ease off after a few minutes. This is called "just-in-time flex."

When Something Important Is at Stake

Whenever an important issue is discussed, flex your style to help it get a fair hearing. Your style has a major impact on your communication. In fact, each style is partly a communication style. When you don't get in sync with another person's style, each of you may tune the other out on the basis of style differences alone. Many a good idea has been killed, not because it lacked merit but because the communication process doomed it from the outset.

Obviously, it makes sense to flex your style when you want to get your message across. It's also important to flex your style when others are trying to get their point across to you. Though *empowerment* is more of a catchy term than a reality in many organizations, the person who excels at communication – both sending and receiving – is increasingly valued by most corporations.

When the Other Person Seems to be Under Considerable Stress

If you see signs of greater than normal stress in a person you're with, use style flex to avoid generating additional tension. To the degree the problem is style-based friction, your adjustments should correct the situation. Even if the stress is related to different points of view on an important issue, flexing your style should help.

When the Person You Are With is Especially Right

As a consequence of their life experiences, some people are especially set in their ways. If you're working with an extreme my-way-not-your-way person, you have to work particularly hard at flexing in order to have a productive process and a positive outcome. By contrast, when the person you are dealing with is highly flexible, you won't have to put as much effort into flexing your style. Of course, you want to do your part in promoting good communication, but the other person is also doing much to bridge the interpersonal gap. Some of the most enjoyable communication occurs when two highly flexible people unconsciously make subtle adjustments that keep them in tune with each other. The conversation can be more like a graceful dance than a disciplined effort to get on the other person's wavelength.